

Commission News

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Oxford High Team A wins State Envirothon!

RAYMOND, MS -- For the 10th time in the past 11 years, Oxford High School Team A placed first overall in the State Envirothon Competition, held on Friday, April 27, 2018, at the FFA Center in Raymond. The team will compete at the National Conservation Foundation, NCF-Envirothon Competition at Idaho State University, in Pocatello, Idaho, July 22-July 26, 2018.

Oxford High School Team B placed second, followed by Pascagoula High School, third place; Hillcrest Team A, fourth place; and Delta Academy Team A, fifth place.

In addition to placing first overall in the State competition, Oxford High School Team A had the high score in the categories of: Soils/Land Use, Oral Presentation, Forestry, Current Issue and Aquatic Ecology. Cleveland Central High School Team B had the high score in the Wildlife category.

Twenty-one teams advanced to the State competition from area competitions, held on March 22, 2018, in the Delta, South, North and Central areas. Twenty teams competed at State.



STATE ENVIROTHON WINNING TEAM OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL, TEAM A, Left to right, Calendula Cheng, Savannah Hesidence, Joanna Bu, Siena Cizdziel, Sadie Pasco-Pranger and Raina Woolworth. Oxford Team A had the high score in Soils/Land Use, Oral Presentation, Forestry, Current Issue and Aquatic Ecology. PHOTO BY KATHY DOUGAN, MSWCC

The top teams at the State competition received scholarships, and their advisor(s) received a cash award.

Mississippi Envirothon, a program of Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission and supported by Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, is a hands-on competition designed to challenge students in grades 9 through 12 to explore natural resources.

The 2018 area competitions included more than 60 student teams with more than 360 students in the competition, and 100 teacher advisors on-site who worked with the teams to prepare for Mississippi Envirothon.

Through local soil and water conservation districts, more than 125 volunteers and resource personnel from state and federal natural resource agencies and organizations worked with educators, sharing environmental expertise to prepare the teams for the competitions.

In intensive preparation for the competitions, students received hands-on assistance from the experts, who tested and judged the area competitions, and assisted at the statewide competition.

Mississippi Envirothon is funded through grants from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and Chevron. Scholarships are funded by Georgia-Pacific Monticello Mill.

MORE Envirothon on page 2

Georgia-Pacific donates funds
for Envirothon scholarships

Doug Hoy (right), Public Affairs/Communications for Georgia-Pacific Monticello LLC, presents a check for Envirothon scholarships to Herman Dungan Jr., MSWCC board of directors.

State Envirothon teams placing 2-5, and Wildlife high score



SECOND PLACE OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL TEAM B, left to right — Emma Teng, Gillian Meyers, Anna Kang, Claire Cizdziel and Srujana Murthy.



THIRD PLACE PASCAGOULA HIGH SCHOOL, left to right — Alexandria Calloway, Jack Monroe Harrison, Hunter Blades, Zaniya Matthews and Cailey Holliday.



FOURTH PLACE HILLCREST CHRISTIAN ACADEMY TEAM A, left to right — Aaliyah Newsome, Gage Mitchell, Sarah Grace Brownlee, Jarod Bewley and Emily Lewis.



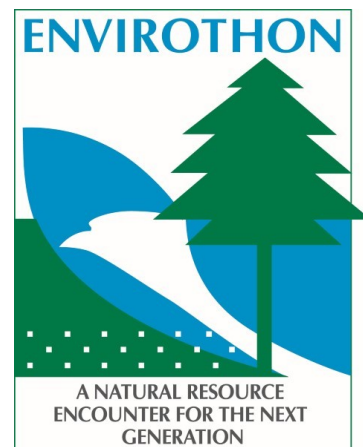
FIFTH PLACE DELTA ACADEMY TEAM A, left to right — Matthew Jackson, Laife Rushing, Will Vonallmen, Kyle Wiggs and Ty Borgannoni.

PHOTOS BY KATHY DOUGAN, MSWCC



2018 STATE ENVIROTHON HIGH SCORE/WILDLIFE, CLEVELAND CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL TEAM B, left to right — Kim Kinget, Trent LaMastus, PJ Davis, Hardy Cooke, Tylar Course and Jacob Dodd.

Oxford High School Team A will compete in July 2018, at the NCF-Envirothon Competition at Idaho State University in Pocatello. In 2017, Oxford High School Team A placed sixth in the NCF Envirothon Competition in Maryland.



WANT TO START AN ENVIROTHON TEAM AT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL?

Call Envirothon Coordinators Chelsey Gazaway (662.647.8857, x103) or Clay Burns (601.354.7645, x304) for more information.



PHOTO BY KATHY DOUGAN, MSWCC

Lamar County SWCD Education Coordinator attends MSWCC April meeting

Commission members welcomed a visit from Lisa Browning, the Lamar County SWCD Education Coordinator, at MSWCC's monthly meeting. Browning is pictured in the back, left corner.

Hinds County to host Forage Field Day May 24

Hinds County is hosting a Forage Field Day on Thursday, May 24, 2018, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Hollingsworth Farm, 2720 Davis Rd., Terry, MS.

Topics include: Hay Production, Insect

Control, Weed Control, Economics, Forage Quality and more.

For registration or more information contact Kyle Lewis at 601-857-3242 or email k.lewis@msstate.edu by May 21.

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Conservation Carnival celebrates Earth Day

TISHOMINGO — An Earth Day carnival was held for Prentiss, Itawamba and Tishomingo schools at Tishomingo State Park on Friday, April 20, 2018.

More than 150 participated in the event, which included presentations about wildlife, trees, bugs, weird plants, bees and pollinators, recycling, birding, Native American history and history of the park.

Friends of Tishomingo State Park sponsored this event.

EXHIBITORS INCLUDED: MS Wildlife, John DeFazio, Wildlife Biologist NRCS; History of the Park, Dr. Don Thompson, NEMCC, ret.; Park Native American History, Bill Brekeen, Cultural Interpreter, Chickasaw Nation; Mississippi Trees, Mike Crabb, Area 13 Forester; It's a Bug's World, Dr. John Guyton, MSU-ES; Water Safety, Craig Koon, Army Corp of Engineers; Water Resources/Quality, Patrick Vowell, Melissa Wells, DEQ; Weird Plants, Dr. Victor Maddox, MSU Geosciences Dept.; Bees/Pollinators, Dr. Jeff Harris, MSU-ES; Recycling, Michelle Williams, Litter Coordinator, MDOT Dist. I; Birding, Delta Datsis, Tishomingo Co. SWCD.



All about birding

Delta Datsis (at left), from the Tishomingo County SWCD, discusses birding and shows students a blue bird box at the Conservation Carnival. MSWCC Field Rep Robin Tisdale at right facing camera, assists.



It's a Bug's (and Spider's) World

Dr. John Guyton, MSU-ES, brings a tarantula to the carnival.



A look inside a bee hive

At left: Dr. Jeff Harris, MSU-ES, discusses bees and pollinators at the Earth Day Conservation Carnival in Pontotoc, while a student looks for the queen bee in the hive.

DON'T FORGET!

MCDEA 2018 Conference is June 26-28, 2018,
at Hampton Inn Hotel in Cleveland, MS.

Please see page 7 for reservation
and conference information.

Two-Day Pontotoc County Conservation Carnival brings out more than 250 participants

PONTOTOC — On April 19-20, 2018, more than 250 participated in a two-day Conservation Carnival at Stafford Park.

There were 14 stops on the tour, including MSWCC's Soil Tunnel, where Field Representative Lee Smith, MSWCC, conducted tours of the tunnel and talked to students about the world underneath the tree roots.



Conservation Carnival in Pontotoc County April 19-20. From left to right, District Conservationist Kevin Corder, NRCS Contract Worker W.D. Newlin, NRCS Technician Jason Burt and MSWCC Field Rep Lee Smith.



Wayne Johnson awarded 25-year service pin

CALHOUN CITY — At the Calhoun Co. Board of Supervisors meeting on April 23, 2018, at First Baptist Church in Calhoun City, Calhoun Co. Commissioner Wayne Johnson was presented with his 25-year service pin. MACD President Pete Hunter, at right, spoke at the event. District Chairman Randy Baker is at left.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 8, 2018

Marshall County Annual Meeting, 6:30 PM, Marshall Co. Extension Office, 120 S. Spring St., Holly Springs

MAY 24, 2018

Hinds Co. Forage Field Day (call 601.857.3242 for info; register by 5/21)

JUNE 3-7, 2018

MS Soil & Water YOUTH CAMP, Hinds CC, Raymond, MS

JUNE 12, 2018

Central Area Summer Meeting, Holmes CC, Kosciusko, MS

JUNE 14, 2018

Delta Area Summer Meeting, Grammy Museum, Cleveland, MS

JUNE 19, 2018

South Area Summer Meeting, Business Plaza, Columbia, MS

JUNE 21, 2018

North Area Summer Meeting, Extension Building, Pittsboro, MS

JUNE 26-28, 2018

MCDEA Summer Meeting, Hampton Inn, Cleveland, MS

Great American Cleanup May 19 in Copiah County

Each year Keep Mississippi Beautiful has a statewide kick-off event for the Great American Cleanup in one of our affiliate's communities- this year we are partnering with Keep Copiah County Beautiful at Lake Hazle in Hazlehurst, MS.

SCHEDULE

8:30 A.M: Kickoff Ceremony,
Lake Hazle pier

9:00 A.M.– NOON: Clean up & Green up
NOON: Lunch

**KEEP COPIAH COUNTY
BEAUTIFUL**
KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE



CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY:

Soil health is key to success at Stovall Farms

BY KATHY DOUGAN, MSWCC

Pete Hunter officially ended his farming days “on a good year,” however, he remains actively involved in farming since Stovall Farms rents its land to two younger friends and Hunter helps with the farm management of the combined farmland – a total of 11,000 acres.

A National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Soil Health Champion, a former cattleman for 11 years and a producer in Coahoma County, Hunter has been farming for more than 40 years. He implements as many best management practices as possible for conservation, and has practiced reduced tillage on his Delta farmland since 1990, combined with no-till cotton. In 2012, Hunter received a Cropland Conservationist Award in the Delta and the state. He was recognized for his accomplishments in the application and promotion of

been land-formed. If the land is not flat, it is made flat with a slight slope for drainage.

The practice of planting a cover crop behind land-leveling procedures goes as far back as the 1960’s, Hunter said, adding that more modern cover crop practices started around 2009 in his area.

“Reduced tillage basically was more economical for what I was trying to accomplish,” Hunter said. “It would reduce compaction and basically kept me from tilling the soil.” Hunter soon noticed that the tilth of the soil changed, and there were more earthworms.

He combined land forming with installing pipes and pads, installing two-stage ditches with weirs, and practicing minimum tillage or no-till, which reduced inputs in production agriculture while maintaining good yields. Hunter utilizes GPS Grid Soil Sampling and variable rate GPS application of fertilizers. He utilizes split applications of fertilizer, integrated pest management, closed chemical mix-



Stovall Farms in Coahoma County, northwest of Clarksdale along the Mississippi River, dates back to the Choctaw Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed on September 27, 1830, and proclaimed on February 24, 1831, between the Choctaw American Indian tribe and the United States Government.

ing systems and other practices to prevent off-target spraying including air induction tips, reduced pressure and lower boom heights. To control drift, he utilizes time-release treatment of nitrogen fertilizers.

Planting more modern cover crops, such as cereal rye, not only aids in soil retention from wind or water erosion, but also aids in weed control. He also plants wheat as a cover crop on some areas of the farm, which helps with erosion and runoff.

To improve water quality, Hunter utilizes a tail water recovery pond for irrigation. This aids residue management and ensures that nutrients and soil particles, as well as adverse chemicals and fertilizer runoff, stay on the farm.

Hunter acknowledges that minimum- to no-till has led to the introduction of new pests and problems

“Our soil is the money-maker on our farms, and many of the soil health practices we implement have increased our profitability by increasing yields, and at the same time reducing overall costs.”

— Pete Hunter

conservation practices on cropland.

Hunter planted cover crop many years ago, which he combined with land forming and precision land-leveling. Since the land is flat in the Delta, most of the land there has

SUCCESS STORY (continued from page 6)

that are normally not a problem with tillage, such as fire ants, snails, slugs, diseases and residue management.



PETE HUNTER

“Because of the introduction of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and minimum tillage, fire ants have moved into the Delta. A funny thing about the Delta – in a no-till bean field, you go into the low bottoms and you have crawfish chimneys that you have to dig out of the combine; across the ridges you have to dig the ant hills out of the combine.” Still, the benefits from these conservation practices and soil health outweigh the problems that occur, Hunter said.

Challenges faced by farmers include the need to spend money at a time of year that maybe money is not readily available, Hunter said, adding that farming profits are so thin now that it is hard to spend money in that respect. Local producers are also faced with the chal-

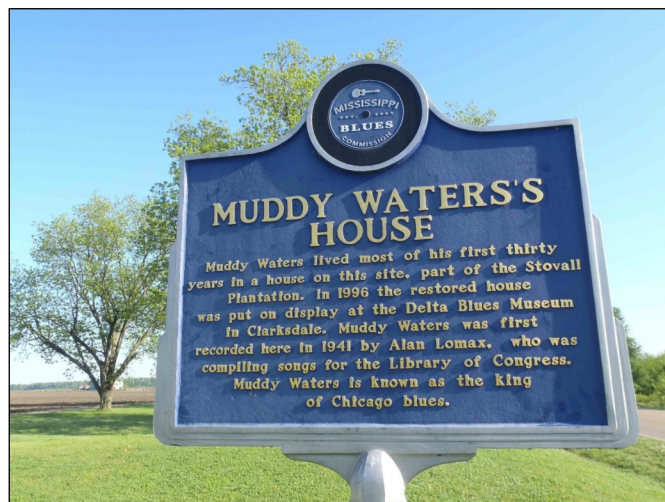
lenge of getting good soil-health practices funded on a cost-share basis. “Only one out of three applications can actually be funded in the short term. Also, with depressed commodity prices, farmers are struggling to match funding contracts.”

His solution to these problems on his farm is to put a long-range plan in motion to slowly accomplish soil-health goals, which will benefit productivity, profitability, and soil health to make the farm sustainable in tough times.

“Our soil is the money-maker on our farms, and many of the soil health practices we implement have increased our profitability by increasing yields, and at the same time reducing overall costs.”

In 2012, Hunter received the Cropland Conservationist Award in the Delta and in the State, recognizing him for his accomplishments in

the application and promotion of conservation practices on cropland. President of MACD, Hunter serves as an alternate for Mississippi on



The house where bluesman Muddy Waters was raised was part of Stovall Plantation. This marker is located at the home site.

the NACD Board of Directors. He and his wife, Pam, enjoy hosting tours and visits on the farm and seek various opportunities to promote soil health and conservation. They have 4 grown children and 6 grandchildren.



See the May 4, 2018, issue of Delta Farm Press Daily news to read more about Pete.

Make your reservations by May 25 for MCDEA 2018 Conference

Don't forget to make your reservations for the 2018 MCDEA Conference on June 26-28, 2018, at Hampton Inn Hotel in Cleveland, MS.

If you register by or before May 25, the conference registration is \$110.00 and includes lunch and dinner on Wednesday, June 27, and lunch on Thursday, June 28.

After May 25, conference registration will cost \$120.00.

The meeting on Wednesday, June 27, and Thursday, June 28, will be at the Airport Grocery Restaurant, 3608 Hwy. 61, Cleveland.

This year's conference will have hands-on activities, educational information for you to take back to your district, and some fun and

exciting things to do, according to Meleiah Tyus, MCDEA president.

If you need more information or have questions, please contact MCDEA President Meleiah Tyus (662-429-8786, ext. 3) or MSWCC Executive Director Mark Gilbert (601-354-7645).

We look forward to seeing you there!